

## 2021 ISSUE PAPER: HEALTH CARE

### Position statements:

The LWWVA position on health care states that health care policies need to “ensure universal access for all residents to a comprehensive, uniform, and affordable set of health services. These services shall be available regardless of one’s health status (pre-existing conditions) or financial status.”

The LWWUS position on health care states that the League “believes that a basic level of quality health care at an affordable cost should be available to all U.S. residents. Every U.S. resident should have access to a basic level of care that includes the prevention of disease, health promotion and education, primary care (including prenatal and reproductive health), acute care, long-term care and mental health care. Every U.S. resident should have access to affordable, quality in- and out-patient behavioral health care, including needed medications and supportive service that is integrated with, and achieves parity with, physical health care. Dental, vision, and hearing care also are important but lower in priority. The League believes that under any system of health care reform, consumers/patients should be permitted to purchase services or insurance coverage beyond the basic level.

The League favors a national health insurance plan financed through general taxes in place of individual insurance premiums. As the United States moves toward a national health insurance plan, an employer-based system of health care reform that provides universal access is acceptable to the League.”

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### Summary of Issues of the 2020 Legislative Session

During the 2020 Legislative Session new medical and behavioral health care legislation bills were passed and signed into law by Gov. Inslee:

- A law to cap out-of-pocket cost of Insulin to \$100 per month for Insulin.
- A law to protect patient care requiring the DOH to create materials for providers and patients about the Death with Dignity Act, and prohibits a health care entity (hospital) from limiting a health care provider's provision of accurate and comprehensive information to patients about end-of-life choices and reproductive treatment options.
- A law to allow rural Health Clinics in Home Health Care shortage areas to be exempt from certain regulations.
- One law to remove barriers to access substance abuse treatment, and another to increase access to medications for opioid use disorder.
- Two laws to establish a Children’s Mental Health workgroup, and to expand adolescent Behavioral Health access.

### Priorities for the 2021 Legislation Session:

- The bill to create the profession of Dental Therapist will be re-introduced by Rep. Eileen Cody.
- Several bills that did not pass in the 2020 Legislative session regarding Behavioral Health may be re-introduced: 1) creating a State Office of BH ombudsman. 2) creating a BH crisis team. 3) educate a BH workforce through career pathways.
- A bill called a ‘transformative policy’ to allow the State to manufacture generic drugs and insulin. Recently California passed such a bill into law. Sponsored by Rep. Eileen Cody and

Rep. My-Linh Thai. Public production of pharmaceuticals seeks to address the root cause of price gouging and substantial cost savings. Public production of generic drugs creates good, high-paying jobs.

- An 'Insulin for All' bill may be introduced to provide emergency access to insulin and other life-saving drugs for those WA residents unable to afford them.
- A 'Primary Care Collaborative' bill. We will have to wait to read who will sponsor and what it means.
- A 'Health Insurance Affordability Account' bill may be introduced, as well as a 'Health Care Premium Assistance' bill.

From an email from Sen. Karen Kaiser: "The session will be mostly virtual zoom meetings for Public Hearings so many fewer bills will be moving anywhere".

Priority will be to protect the gains we have against budget cuts, including supporting new revenue legislation.

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**Coalitions joined:**

Health Care is a Human Right Coalition- WA: [www.healthcareisarithwa.org](http://www.healthcareisarithwa.org)

WA State Dental Access Campaign: [www.wadentalaccess.com](http://www.wadentalaccess.com)